

**Considerations in designing and evaluating material aimed at meeting the training and development needs of prospective teachers undertaking intensive initial ELT teacher education programmes**

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## **Abstract**

There has been very little research on the effects of initial teacher education in English language teaching (ELT), especially in the context of short intensive pre-service courses. Even more scarce has been any published evaluation of material aimed at helping teachers in such contexts.

This essay aims to begin to fill that gap by drawing on the author's experience to describe and analyze the processes that led to the design and subsequent evaluation of materials aimed at such a learning context. In so doing, it develops and applies a methodology for post-use evaluation of materials and sets out opportunities for further research. The teacher education materials referred to are submitted with the essay, along with a published evaluation of one of those books, and other related publications.

This essay contextualizes pre-publication evaluation procedures within the need to ensure that teacher education material is based on theoretically justifiable foundations. To that end, it briefly reviews trends in ELT teacher education and outlines the need for evidence based decisions on content before describing and commenting on pre-publication evaluation processes. The essay sets out the methodological decisions made when carrying out one published post-use evaluation before summarizing the findings and discussion of that study. It then sets out alternative post-use evaluation procedures and goes on to suggest principled criteria by which initial teacher education material can be effectively evaluated.

The essay concludes by setting out two types of contribution to knowledge made by the total submission. One contribution is based on substantive findings from research. This includes the insight that early-career teachers value and benefit from discussing teaching with teachers of a similar status. Also, prospective teachers use teacher education material selectively and they value instruction in core competencies. In addition, it was found that the emotional aspects of socializing into the profession are often over-looked in initial teacher education.

The second contribution to knowledge is procedural in nature. It seems axiomatic that, as part of a thorough quality control process, material should be evaluated after it has been used and this submission is based on a description, analysis and further development of a rigorous, post-use, public evaluation of teacher education material. As far as I know, this was the first systematic evaluation of teacher education material to be published that tried to gauge the impacts of specific material on users.

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## 1.0 Introduction

This submission describes an investigation into the design and evaluation of material aimed at those who want to learn to be English language teachers. It makes a case for rigorous post-use evaluations and suggests methods by which those evaluations may be carried out. The context referred to throughout is intensive initial ELT (English language teaching) teacher education programmes, of which the Cambridge ESOL CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) course is the best known example. For this course alone there are currently over 12,000 candidates a year, spread through 286 centres around the world (CELTA FAQs, n.d.). This clearly means that the courses have a huge direct impact on many lives, and an indirect impact on many more. However, there has been relatively little research done on the impacts of initial teacher education (Farrell, 2009) and where it has been carried out it has tended to focus on much longer courses such as those leading to B.Ed. TESOL awards (Kiely, 2011), with very little published research on intensive courses, such as CELTA (Borg, 2005, p.5). Furthermore, there is very little literature on the evaluation of teacher education material (Rahimi, 2008). As far as I know, there is no published research on the evaluation of a specific teacher education text in the ELT context other than Publication 5, submitted here. While the material accessed is only part of learning to teach, its role makes it worthy of consideration.

## 1.1 Overview

The publications submitted with this essay are listed in Appendix 1. The publications fall into four broad and related categories:

- publications that provide material for teacher education in different contexts
- a publication that evaluates teacher education material
- publications that develop the knowledge base concerning the process of teacher education
- publications that contribute to and disseminate knowledge of teaching

The links between the publications are described in detail in Appendix 2, along with a measure of their impacts. The publications make a contribution to knowledge both substantively (in the sense of insights gained through research, Publications 5, 7, 8 and 13) and procedurally by analyzing methods by which teacher education material can be evaluated.

This essay demonstrates a process of ongoing research and considers the impact of the material itself and reflects on and develops the published evaluation study. McGrath (2002)

points out that very little research has been done on the actual effects of material in ELT. As stated above, the literature on the evaluation of material for initial teacher education is even more scarce and this submission attempts to begin to fill that gap. It is through the systematic, rigorous and public evaluation of the effects of material on actual users that progress in design can be made (Masuhara and Tomlinson, 2010, p.417).

## 1.2 The background to the teacher education material

In the early 2000s, CELTA pre-course reading lists commonly contained Scrivener (1994) and/or Harmer (1991 or 2001), as well as language reference works, such as Swan (1995). These are all excellent books, as is shown by their enduring appeal and successive editions. However, my experience of running CELTA courses suggested that their appropriacy for this context was questionable. I felt that in places they assumed knowledge that wasn't always established and that this made it difficult for prospective teachers to extract the core messages from the surrounding detail. It seemed from observation that the books were rarely used when prospective teachers planned lessons. In my role as a CELTA assessor I visited many centres and realised that other tutors had made similar observations.

I believed there was potential for a book that was a more basic introduction to the sort of English language teaching for which CELTA courses prepared people. *Learning to Teach English* developed from this hypothesis and was guided by my belief that it should emphasize the practical, in line with the assumed needs of the users. As a result, I designed it around descriptions of activities that could be directly applied in the classroom. Delta Publishing was attracted because the book was differentiated from alternatives in this regard.

*The CELTA Course* came about very differently. Around a year after *Learning to Teach English* was published, Cambridge University Press commissioned six proposals for a CELTA course book that had originally been suggested by the CELTA awarding body, Cambridge ESOL. The most suitable proposal would be developed with the input of an experienced and established author. My proposal was chosen and Scott Thornbury was the co-author. The aim was to provide a stock of flexible, adaptable material that would support intensive initial teacher education. We each wrote 50% of the material, and acted as a 'first editor' of each other's work. Scott had a preference for working on the language awareness units and had a significant publishing background in this area (for example, Thornbury, 1997, 2004) and so wrote these. I pursued my interest in teaching methodology, producing most of these units. (See Appendix 3 for a detailed breakdown of first writing responsibilities.)

*Cambridge English Teacher* (the online material) was commissioned by Cambridge University Press in 2011 after discussions concerning what such a course may include and how the writing might be approached.

The publications are aimed at different contexts of use. Publication 3 is a traditional book format and is designed to be used without direction from a teacher educator. Publications 1 and 2 constitute a packaged teacher education course, designed to be mediated by teacher educators. Publication 4 is an online publication aimed at practising teachers who have had little or no formal training. Being online, it makes use of multi-modal input in a way that is not open to the other titles.



## 2.0 Pre-publication evaluation

Before a 'product' emerges that can be evaluated, a writer has made a series of decisions concerning content. Just as Tomlinson (2003, 1998) argues that ELT materials evaluation must be based on how we believe people learn languages, so it follows that teacher education material must be based on how we believe people learn teaching. I will briefly discuss these broad principles that inform the publications, based on developments in teacher education over recent years.

### 2.1 Current trends in teacher education

In their seminal paper calling for a reconceptualization of the knowledge base of language teacher education, Freeman and Johnson (1998) argue that, to that point, teacher education had too often been conceived of as a process of equipping teachers to apply a methodology (based on second language acquisition (SLA) theory) to the teaching of content (based on linguistic descriptions). In this "applied science" model (Wallace, 1991) teachers are characterized as operatives, whose job it is to implement the prescribed methodology efficiently in the classroom. Freeman and Johnson argue that teacher education, as well as addressing these questions of what and how, also needs to address the human and contextual elements of teaching:

Clearly, any understanding of teaching must be anchored in examinations of learning and learners. However, teaching as an activity cannot be separated from either the person of the teacher as a learner or the contexts of schools and schooling in which it is done. (Johnson and Freeman, 1998, 409-410)

This follows mainstream educational research in creating a distinction between the "disciplinary knowledge" of what should be taught and "pedagogical content knowledge" (Shulman, 1986) – the knowledge that teachers use to make content engaging, accessible and comprehensible for learners. For Shulman, the importance of pedagogical content knowledge is so great that "the ultimate test of understanding rests on the ability to transform one's knowledge into teaching" (1986, p.14). Other researchers also see teacher knowledge as being primarily practical (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin and Connelly, 1987; Perkins, 1997) although in these cases there is a shift away from the top-down view based on what teachers 'should' know (Shulman) more towards what they 'do' know. Assessing teacher knowledge can be based on what emerges from teachers' narratives and accounts (Elbaz, and Clandinin and Connelly, for example) or be based on observed action (Perkins, following the work of Schön, 1983, for example). Although there are divergences in what constitutes

'teacher knowledge', the clear emphasis on practical classroom activity has been a major influence on second language teacher education.

While traditional views of teacher learning often viewed the teachers' task as the application of theory to practice, more recent views see teacher learning as the theorization of practice; in other words, making visible the nature of practitioner knowledge and providing the means by which such knowledge can be elaborated, understood and reviewed. (Burns and Richards, 2009, p.4)

This suggests that it is through teaching that knowledge becomes 'visible' and is then open to elaboration and revision. To put it simply, teachers learn to teach through teaching, thus suggesting that material aimed at initial teacher education should be highly practical in order to support this process.

The shift towards the valuing of practitioner knowledge has led to "the realization that we cannot properly understand teachers and teaching without understanding the thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs that influence what teachers do" (Borg, 2009, p.163). In the case of initial teacher education, this means examining the cognitions that prospective teachers bring to the course and studying how these cognitions develop. Few studies have been done in the context of intensive courses such as CELTA, but Borg (2006, p.64) cites two examples. A study by Richards, Ho and Giblin (1996) suggested that although there was relative uniformity in the way the prospective teachers adopted the professional discourse element of the programme, they each understood other core principles of the course in individual ways, depending on their own beliefs and assumptions. This highlights the need to address such beliefs and assumptions within a course as they interact with the other content. In the second study, by Borg, M. (2005), a prospective teacher appeared to have her existing beliefs (a learner-centred approach) confirmed. Borg, S. argues that this is a form of the course having impact, as impact can result in beliefs and practice being ratified, as well as changed. From this and his own study (Borg, 1998), he concluded that the intensity and practical nature of CELTA courses could exert powerful influences on teachers' beliefs.

There is a need for some caution though. Borg, M. says that while the teacher in the case study did change her beliefs in some ways, the picture of change and resistance to change remained "complex". She ascribes part of this to the CELTA course itself, saying (2005, p.25):

There was never any discussion with trainees of what they brought with them to the course, and trainees were expected to adopt and use techniques without much consideration of their beliefs or stance towards these techniques.

While this observation relates to one iteration of a CELTA course and would not necessarily be true of all, it is clear that for material to be of maximum use on such courses, it needs to address teacher cognitions. In Publication 4, the online material, this is addressed through instructions early in the unit such as “Take a few moments now to think back to the strategies you use now for teaching vocabulary. How effective are they? Write your thoughts in your journal” (Unit 2, p.3). In *The CELTA Course* it is achieved through pair and group discussions in the ‘Warm up’ sections (for example, *Trainee Book*, p.25).

When trying to measure the impact of a course on teachers’ cognitions, it should also be remembered that there may be divergence between an individual’s stated beliefs and how these are put into operation in a classroom. And even where observed behaviour matches the stated beliefs, we cannot be certain of a lasting impact because prospective teachers may feel that they should teach in a certain way to please teacher educators, while reverting to methods more in line with pre-existing beliefs at some later point (Almarza, 1996). Despite these difficulties with measuring changes in cognitions, there is agreement that what teachers think, know and believe is vital to the interpretation of input (Pennington, 1996). Borg (2009a) highlights that failure to take such factors into account will hinder development, particularly where prior understandings are “inappropriate, unrealistic, or naive” (p.164). Teacher education materials therefore need to provide for the investigation of prospective teachers’ cognitions.

With the greater value accorded to teachers and contexts, so the learning of teaching is seen as:

...a long-term, complex developmental process that operates through participation in the social practices and contexts associated with learning and teaching. (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p.402)

This constructivist position suggests that initial teacher education programmes should include elements that allow a prospective teacher to develop after a course has finished. Mann (2005, p.104) summarizes the training process as introducing “the methodological choices available and to familiarize the trainees with the range of terms and concepts that are the ‘common currency’ of language teachers” and states that there is “widespread agreement that some sort of training or initial preparation to be a teacher is necessary”. Development, on the other hand, is characterized as being an essentially self-directed and

bottom-up process (p.105). He notes that there has been “a shift towards ensuring that training integrates and maintains a development imperative” (p.105). Therefore initial teacher education materials need to promote both “technical competence in teaching” (Richards, 2002, p.25) and the skills necessary for future development.

Perhaps the key model for ongoing development is the encouragement of reflective practice. This has become a pervasive model in teacher education although how precisely it is interpreted and implemented may vary considerably (Farrell, 2012). In Publication 1 (p.175) we describe a learning cycle with four stages.

- action – having an experience
- reflection – reviewing the experience
- theory building – concluding from the experience
- experimentation – planning the next steps

This is based heavily on Kolb (1984) and was chosen as a model partly because of its resonance with the current practice of CELTA courses and also because it seemed unthreatening for novice teachers. The separation of action and reflection is problematic in some ways as Schön (1983, 1987) argues that teachers can reflect while they teach (reflection-in-action), using the insight to change the direction of lessons and activities. However, a teacher needs a repertoire of routines that can be switched in and out of in order for this to happen (Farrell, 2012) and so to see it as a default and expected procedure for prospective teachers could be seen as overly demanding. The reflection stage in the simple cycle described in Publication 1 is both backward looking (reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983, 1987)) and forward looking, as it shapes strategies for future lessons.

As well as the reference to Kolb, the publications introduce and support reflection in various ways. Publication 3 identifies ‘reflector’ as a key teacher role (p.14) and gives guidance on reflection (p.128). In Publication 4 teachers are given instructions and questions to help guide their reflection in the sections titled *From theory to practice*. *The CELTA Course* has reflection sections at the end of each unit and also includes tasks to support reflection after teaching (Publication 1, p.181-183).

Reflection takes many forms and may include written processes, such as narratives and journal writing. Burton (2005, p.3) highlights how thoughts and activities are documented by writing, giving a basis for future reflection. In addition, the process of deciding what to record and how to characterize it is itself a form of reflective activity. Writing need not be solely personal and introspective. Increasingly, given modern technology, writing can be public and co-constructed.

Österman and Kottkamp (1993, p.19) argue for the benefits of collaboration:

[reflective teaching] is neither a solitary nor a relaxed meditative process. To the contrary, reflective practice is a challenging, demanding, and often trying process that is most successful as a collaborative effort.

This collaborative model is frequently used on CELTA courses, with prospective teachers expected to comment constructively on the lessons of their peers. A key benefit is that collaborative group reflection can facilitate the co-construction and development of ideas that are only tentatively suggested by one individual. Although CELTA courses use some written reflection, they typically make greater use of oral reflection, often using prompted recall (teacher educators may direct reflection to certain actions, for example). The focus on oral reflection is probably a consequence of limited time. However, Publication 1 includes journal writing tasks (p.183-184) to encourage written reflection, given the potential benefits (Burton, 2005).

Collaborative reflection is one facet of collaborative teacher development (Johnston, 2009). Such collaboration moves teachers away from working in isolation and reinforces the notion of teaching being learned through social processes. It also has connotations of being part of a bottom-up process (in line with other development activities) and being non-judgemental. CELTA courses prepare people well for this sort of collaboration, partly because of the camaraderie forged through the intensive nature of the course (Senior, 2006, p.40). These skills of supporting others, being open to support, and collaborating are important to success in entering the profession. Publication 7, for example, found that new teachers value discussing teaching with other new teachers.

As teachers' knowledge and experience has become more central to the understanding of teaching and learning to teach (Roberts, 1998) so there has been a shift towards teachers researching their own classrooms (Nunan, 1989; Borg, 2009b). Despite the difficulties of teachers doing research (McKernan, 1991), Burns (2009, p.292) reports that practising teachers find action and practitioner research projects to be a valuable form of professional development, which incorporates the particular benefits associated with taking the local context fully into account (Holliday, 1994; Hiep, 2007). Although there are potential advantages in such research and it can be incorporated into longer teacher preparation courses (Korthagen, Loughran and Russell, 2006), it is not usually a feasible option during very short courses and for this reason it is not explicitly included in any of the publications submitted here.

The need for theoretically justifiable material extends beyond over-arching approaches to teacher education, such as those outlined above, to specific content, where insights from literature are likely to be combined with the writer's own experience and intuition (Prowse, 1998). We will move on to look at these specific content decisions in the following section.

## 2.2 Deciding on content

Teacher education material must make principled choices when deciding on content. I will use grammar instruction to illustrate how the literature impacts on content decisions because grammar is considered central to teaching in many contexts and there is continued debate surrounding its efficacy (Ortega, 2009, p.139). A number of key assumptions about the teaching of grammar can be extracted from a reading of chapter 6 of Publication 3. Table 1 summarizes just some of these assumptions and notes examples of the literature underpinning them.

<b>assumption</b>	<b>relevant literature</b>
teachers should be able to teach grammar explicitly	Norris and Ortega (2000) reviewed various studies and found a benefit for explicit teaching. Explicit teaching of grammar fits with a weak interface position (e.g. Ellis, 1997) which states that explicit teaching (of some items) may help input become intake. Some explicit grammar teaching may lead to improved conscious and unconscious grammatical knowledge (Spada and Lightbown, 2008) and the noticing of particular language data in the input (Schmidt, 1995, 2001, cited in Ortega, 2009). The value of focusing on form (Long, 1991) may have clear advantages when arising from communicative contexts and therefore explicit grammar teaching is not confined to so-called weak forms of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). See, for example, Willis and Willis (2007) and their discussion of task-based teaching.
teachers should be able to set up and exploit practice activities focusing on an item of target language	The argument for practice comes largely from cognitive learning theory (e.g. DeKeyser, 2007), which sees it as a stage which is necessary for automaticity of language use to develop. Practice may also fit in with both learners' and teachers' beliefs (Muranoi, 2007, p.51) and this will contribute to maintaining a positive regard for the learning experience (Dörnyei, 2001).
teachers should be able to set up and	Output is likely to be an important ingredient in language acquisition. Swain (1985, 1995) argues that this happens through

exploit extended learner output opportunities	learners being more likely to 'notice the gap' between what they want to express and what they are able to express when they are producing language. Also, output gives opportunities for learners to test out hypotheses about how language works and negotiate meaning when communication is impaired (Long, 1991). Larsen-Freeman (1995) argues that 'grammaring' – seeing the use of grammar as a skill that learners develop, rather than an abstract body of knowledge – can be promoted through using tasks that require particular patterns. From a cognitive perspective, opportunities for output will help to automate language use. Sociocultural learning theory (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978) would also support the need for practice and output because performance with a more skilled other is likely to lead to appropriation of the skill and in the classroom learners can mutually 'scaffold' each other's performances, as well as receive support from the teacher.
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Table 1 – Summary of theory underpinning some assumptions made in *Learning to Teach English*, chapter 6

Arguing for explicit grammar instruction, does not necessarily imply the need for a grammar dominated syllabus, nor necessarily that all learners in all contexts will benefit from explicit grammar teaching. However, given the potential benefits, initial teacher education needs to prepare teachers so that they can convey the form and meaning of grammar patterns where it is appropriate. Table 1 presents the assumptions in an order of presentation, practice and output. However, as argued in Publication 5, there is no reason that this sequence should dominate, merely that teachers should have the necessary skills that can be deployed at appropriate times and sequences for a given context. The assumptions outlined above could be broken down further. For example, Practice activity 1 (page 44) promotes practice that is both communicative and personalized, while Activity 3 (page 44) implies a benefit from corrective feedback.

Ensuring that the material is based on a firm theoretical foundation is clearly an important step in ensuring the quality of the material.

### 2.3 Forms of pre-publication evaluation

Having looked at some of the issues to be considered before writing, we will now move on to consider the ways in which material can be evaluated before publication.

Pre-publication evaluation can be split into internal and external feedback, internal being that which comes from the publisher and those closely associated with the project and external feedback from those who probably had no knowledge of the project until being asked to comment on samples of material. The key products of the external review process are ‘readers’ reports’, considered in section 2.4, below.

Table 2 summarizes the writing stages and sources of evaluation that were applicable to Publications 1, 2 and 3 and represents a fairly standard process.

stage of writing	sources of evaluation
proposal	internal review external review (in the form of readers’ reports)
manuscript drafting	co-author*
completed draft 1	editor(s) internal review external review (in the form of readers’ reports)
manuscript drafting	co-author*
completed draft 2	editor(s) internal review
*This is only applicable to <i>The CELTA Course</i> . <i>Learning to Teach English</i> had nothing directly corresponding to this and resulted in greater degrees of introspection and self-evaluation during drafting.	

Table 2: Writing stages and sources of evaluation

The comments from editors are separated from the other sources of internal review because they tend to take different perspectives, with the editors focusing on the detail of particular passages, while other internal reviewers focus more generally on whether the book will appeal to target markets. To use Ellis’s (1998) terms, this is a difference of micro and macro-evaluation. In addition, Monica Poulter, the Head of Teaching Awards Programmes at Cambridge ESOL (the awarding body of CELTA), was invited to comment on both the proposal and first draft of *The CELTA Course* but she and her team made only brief comments.

It should be noted that although *The CELTA Course* provided material to be used in a classroom, the materials were never fully piloted due to time constraints. However, the methodology units were based around material that I had previously used when teaching CELTA courses. Clearly, more rigorous piloting of such material, in more varied contexts,



conducted by another person, and therefore more objectively commented on, would be beneficial (Donovan, 1998, p.149).

## 2.4 The role of readers' reports

As is usual, the formal readers' reports for Publications, 1, 2 and 3 were written 'blind', in that neither the writer(s) nor readers knew each other's identities. Clearly this has the advantage that factors such as personality and reputation cannot affect the result and anonymity may encourage more direct and honest feedback, particularly where material is negatively evaluated. Publication 4 could not be reviewed in the same way because the expense of building the online material meant that alterations were problematic. This was countered to some extent by building in additional internal review stages for this publication but all of these were at the 'paper' stage, so it remained hard to visualize what the material would actually look like on screen.

Each reviewer was given a brief of what the report should include. Despite this, the scope and nature of the reviews varied widely and the reports were much less systematic than the models of general ELT material evaluation proposed by, for example, Cunningsworth (1984, 1995), Breen and Candlin (1987) or Littlejohn (1998). However, in my experience, this is true for most material evaluations conducted by publishers and is not confined to teacher education material.

Three people wrote reports on *Learning to Teach English* after the first draft. Two were very positive, while one raised three concerns. The first concern was that pronunciation was underrepresented. The second was that grammar and vocabulary teaching were insufficiently distinct. In the first draft there had been a deliberate attempt to articulate and exemplify the notion that:

...it is very difficult to isolate grammar and lexis into completely separate categories, because grammar does not exist on its own. It is interdependent with lexis and, in many cases, grammatical regularity and acceptability are conditioned by words.  
(DeCarrico and Larsen-Freeman, 2002, p.26)

The last concern was that reference to 'stronger' forms of CLT may lead to users not thoroughly appreciating the importance of staging lessons to meet specified linguistic outcomes.

As a result the second draft did treat grammar and vocabulary as being more distinct. I was swayed by the fact that the courses with which I was familiar at the time did separate vocabulary and grammar and I followed the conventional wisdom, although commonalities

were signalled in chapter 4 of the publication. After reflection and taking the publisher's views into account, the other two suggestions were rejected. Particularly in the case of stronger versions of CLT, I felt that the advantages, including the support offered by SLA research (for example, Pica, 1994), outweighed any potential disadvantages. This was an opportunity to disseminate current thinking on learning and how it could be realized in a classroom.

A similar reporting process was used for *The CELTA Course*, although more people commented overall, seventeen in total. The first three reports came after the proposal stage. One was exceptionally negative. The concern was fully anticipated, although we hadn't expected it to be voiced at this stage of the process and was articulated by a reviewer who had very strong opinions on what s/he termed 'course ownership', seeing the publication as an unwanted drive towards standardization of content and delivery on the part of Cambridge ESOL. The notion of a single book attempting to capture the diversity of CELTA courses as provided by different centres around the world was considered to be inappropriate. As the criticisms were aimed at the concept of the project, rather than the realization of the material (which was actually praised), it was beyond us, as writers, to address the concerns. The feedback wasn't particularly useful to us, as everyone involved with the project expected some stakeholders to see the book in that light. Perhaps a clearer brief, or a more careful choice of reviewer, would have helped to avoid this situation.

When the first draft was completed it went out for more detailed reports. The feedback was amalgamated and presented in a table with a column for our response, ensuring we either acted on the suggestion (giving details of how this would be achieved) or, if we rejected the suggestion, giving a detailed rebuttal.

Just as had been the case with *Learning to Teach English*, we were very happy to accept most of the suggestions because they improved the work, typically in terms of omissions, redundancies and ambiguity. Negative comments prompted reflection on potential shortcomings and re-writing where necessary. Occasionally reports on *The CELTA Course* were contradictory, with one reviewer praising a particular feature and another criticizing it. For example, one reviewer felt that the degree of detail in the notes in the *Trainer's Manual* was unnecessary, while another commented positively on this. Although we didn't change the notes, just as with *Learning to Teach English*, the negative feedback wasn't ignored. It prompted us to reconsider, to think through exactly who we were aiming the notes at, and why we had chosen to present them as we had and this was a useful process in itself.

## 2.5 Some reflections on the pre-publication process

Overall the use of blind reader reports is clearly very beneficial. The comments come from people with great experience of teaching and teacher education and therefore can be very helpful in shaping the manuscript and anonymity allows them freedom to express their thoughts. However, there are some disadvantages to the system. For example, it makes any discussion of issues raised difficult. The reports were seen as a finished product, rather than allowing any discussion with the report writer. This attitude probably comes about partly from the time pressures associated with meeting publishing deadlines.

The evaluations tend to be written by highly skilled and experienced ELT professionals. However, in the case of material aimed at initial teacher education, the very fact that the reviewers have a great deal of experience means that their perspective on the material is removed from that of the target user. One of the aims of *Learning to Teach English* was to write in an easily accessible style and I assumed that the reviewers would bring far greater prior knowledge to their reading than the target users of the book. In order to counter this, a friend who fitted the profile of target users commented specifically on the clarity and ease of following certain sections. This was useful and resulted in several rewordings, such as the descriptions of classroom activities and the explanations given in the reference sections. The direct communication with the reviewer allowed me to elicit more information (where exactly communication became unclear, for example) and I could experiment with alternative wordings where a section was proving problematic. It was illuminating to discuss sections almost line by line with a potential user of the book. Of course, there are issues over how much credence should be given to one person's perceptions and it also assumes that the reviewer feels able to be frank when making their comments.

This experience was used when *The CELTA Course* was reviewed. As well as seeking the views of experienced stakeholders, we also arranged a reviewer who had just completed a course and so was close to the target demographic of the *Trainee Book*. Also, the views of a less experienced teacher educator, thus matching the target demographic for the *Trainer's Manual*, were sought.

In short, blind reviews offer a reasonably objective assessment by peers and offer numerous useful suggestions for improvement from people who are experts in the field. However, the reviews tend to be a fixed product and no discussion is possible with the producer of the report. Occasionally, through a breakdown of communication between the reviewer and the publisher, or a lack of care in selecting a reviewer, a report may end up being a wasted opportunity to develop the project. In addition, for obvious reasons, publishers choose reviewers who are experienced and have expertise in the field. However, particularly in the

case of initial teacher education, these voices do not represent the target users of the material and there is a case for a more 'bottom-up' approach to also be included.

The pre-publication process goes some way to assuring quality in the production of material. However, it seems self evident that having produced material, it is necessary to move away from assumptions about how it may work, to trying to evaluate how it works in reality, and trying to gauge the effects it has on users (McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2010). We will move on to look at post-publication evaluations.

### 3.0 Methodology

Publication 3 was based on my hypothesis that a book that was practical and accessible would benefit prospective teachers. Publication 5 was an evaluation of Publication 3, which aimed to answer the question: *How effective was the book as an introduction to ELT?* This was investigated by looking at five specific questions:

- Was the book relevant?
- Was it practical?
- Was it accessible?
- Did it support future development?
- Did it develop over-arching beliefs about teaching, as well as present a list of competencies?

An outline of the methodology used, including participants, is given on pages 373-374 of Publication 5. Here I will consider the methodology used more fully.

#### 3.1 Research approach

One way of measuring effectiveness was to investigate the opinions of those who had used the book and thus carry out a survey, albeit on a small-scale. I wanted to investigate how people used the book, and why they felt the way they did, analyzing specific examples they offered wherever possible. Largely qualitative research seemed appropriate to investigate these issues, particularly as opinions were involved (Groom and Littlemore, 2011, p.61).

Where “key interpretations” are made from the data, such as in Publication 5, then additional effort is required to confirm those interpretations (Stake, 1995, p.112) and this research approach allowed for various forms of data triangulation.

##### 3.1.1 Triangulation of the data

Triangulation is glossed by Richards, Ross and Seedhouse (2012, p.350) as “approaching the data from different perspectives in order to get a ‘fix’ on them”. It has an ethical dimension (see section 3.1.2), as there is a responsibility on the researcher “to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding” (Stake, 1995, p.109). Stake (1995, p.112) cites Denzin (1984) in identifying four ‘protocols’ of triangulation:

- data source triangulation – for example, through having more than one informant (informant triangulation) or collecting data at different times (time triangulation)
- investigator triangulation – multiple interviewers, for example, will help to eliminate bias arising from that source

- theory triangulation – the use of more than one theoretical position. Stake (1995, p.113) argues that the use of multiple investigators implies a degree of theoretical triangulation as no two people will interpret events in the exact same way
- methodological triangulation – using more than one investigative method

Publication 5 used multiple informants and the data was collected over several months (data source triangulation). Although a largely qualitative approach was taken, there was some quantitative analysis (methodological triangulation). However, although a range of participants was used, as mentioned above, there was a focus on those based in the UK and this may have led to 'situational' skewing, due to the possibility that views held in the UK would not be reflected elsewhere. Investigating the extent of this limitation would be a worthwhile aim of future research.

### 3.1.2 Ethical considerations

Kvale (1996, p.110) points out that ethical decisions are not a separate stage of the research process but are an integral part of it, from initial design through to the reporting of the study. There were three basic principles that I adhered to throughout (Kvale, 1996, p.153-4; McDonough and McDonough, 1997, p.67-8; Denscombe, 2010, p.331-334):

- participants gave informed consent
- participants remained anonymous
- participants' interests were protected

Before the interview, participants were told that I was the author of the book, the purpose of the research and that their anonymity would be protected. In addition, they were told that they could stop the interview at any time they wished. They gave, or withheld, permission to be recorded and explicitly agreed that their words could be quoted. Participants were asked to sign an 'informed consent form' (Appendix 4).

Anonymity was guaranteed through not using the participants' names, through not identifying centres where they had followed a course, or indeed identifying whether they had followed a CELTA course or a Trinity College Certificate in TESOL programme. There were no questions that were likely to cause offence or other psychological harm to the participant.

However, as well as protecting the interests of the participants, I also felt that I had a duty to protect the publisher, which had made an investment in the project. This was achieved through informing the publisher that I had begun to collect data (a process that was encouraged), obtaining consent for *Learning to Teach English* to be explicitly discussed in Publication 5 (this was given) and showing the publisher a draft before it was submitted (no

changes were requested). It should be noted that Delta Publishing was very supportive of the research throughout, believing it would generate genuinely useful information.

### 3.2 Interviews

I decided to use semi-structured interviews as a research tool, as they would allow enough flexibility to follow up responses, while still ensuring that key points regarding the research questions were covered (McDonough and McDonough, 1997, p.183). Kvale states that “The research interview is an interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest” (1996, p.125). Indeed, just as in a conversation, so content in an interview is co-constructed between the participants (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002, p.15) and it is important to build rapport and follow ‘the rules of conversation’ (Groom and Littlemore, 2011, p.62). However, unlike a conversation, in interviews there is an asymmetry of power, with the interviewer setting the agenda (Kvale, 1996, p.126). In practice this means the interviewer needs to reduce the power differential as much as possible to facilitate ‘conversation’ and open exchange, while exercising power to ensure that the ‘agenda’ is covered fully and within the specified duration of the meeting.

In addition, interviews are never completely neutral. Interviewees give an account of which they are a part and may therefore include details that cast them in a favourable light, while omitting anything that may indicate failings (Richards, Ross and Seedhouse, 2011, p.133). I therefore probed answers and requested examples, particularly where there was apparently conflicting information.

#### 3.2.1 Conducting the interviews

While I was able to arrange some of the 28 participants myself, I used contacts at a nearby CELTA centre to make introductions for many of the interactions, so the sample was opportunistic and not controlled for age or gender, as I wanted to interview as many people as possible. A fuller description of the participants is included in Appendix 5. While I believe, based on experience, that the sample was reasonably representative of those who follow such courses in the UK, the UK bias and the resultant over-representation of white British ethnic backgrounds is a limitation of the research. Also, people who used the book, but did not enrol on a course, were not represented because of the difficulties inherent in locating them. Extending data source triangulation by investigating a wider range of users would be useful future research.

Where participants agreed, I used audio-recording. Mishler (1986) argues that this loses important aspects of non-verbal communication, which could be analyzed if, for example,

video were used. However, I decided against using video because rigorous analysis of all non-verbal features would have been exceptionally time-consuming, without necessarily yielding new insights and the videoing process may have interfered with building a rapport.

Where participants preferred not to be recorded, I made field notes during the interview and added in as much detail as I could immediately afterwards (Stake, 1995, p.66) – more than was possible while conducting the interview, without interrupting the flow of the exchange. Of course, this made the data a matter of recollection and even greater interpretation (Denscombe, 2010, p.187) but had the advantage of respondents feeling more relaxed, and therefore being more open, than may otherwise have been the case.

The interviews prompted retrospective recall (Groom and Littlemore, 2011, p.66). In this case the prompts were both physical (looking at sections of the book) and verbal (through the questioning of past experiences). Appendix 6 contains an outline of the interview structure, although the framework was not followed rigidly as I wanted to develop a conversation with the respondents, minimizing the inherent asymmetry of the exchange by attempting to put them at their ease at the start of the interview (see below) and by following 'conversational rules'. For example, I made a conscious effort to listen actively (Groom and Littlemore, 2011, p.62), use backchanneling devices, smile, make eye contact and show that responses were valued. I allowed respondents to develop issues as far as possible, and worked from their observations towards greater detail, thus following aspects of top-down hierarchical processing procedures (Tomlinson, 1989, p.162).

There was a danger of a 'Hawthorne effect' (Denscombe, 2010, p.142) with the respondents potentially tempted to say what they believed the interviewer (as author) wanted to hear. I attempted to mitigate this in two ways. The first was to have a small group of respondents complete questionnaires anonymously, without me being present (Publication 5, p.374). The other was to include questions, particularly towards the beginning of the interview where rapport and trust were still being established, that avoided the respondent being asked to make value judgements of the material as far as possible. Tuckman (1972, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007 p.358) says that:

Specific questions, like direct ones, may cause a respondent to become cautious or guarded and give less-than-honest answers. Non-specific questions may lead circuitously to the desired information but with less alarm by the respondents.

The first questions asked were quite general, based on what respondents felt motivated people to learn English, in the hope that this would put respondents at their ease. Following



this, the respondents indicated which chapters had been read from a list. This was also intended to be non-threatening because no explicit judgement of the material was required.

I moved the conversation on when I felt that the interviewee had contributed all they were able to but I tried to give sufficient space to allow points to be developed. This was achieved partly through the use of silence (Kvale, 1996, p.134) which gave interviewees the chance to think, reflect and develop a point. Where necessary I prompted for examples or asked questions to clarify any ambiguity or inconsistencies.

One potential drawback of the semi-structured interview is that “important and salient topics” may be omitted (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.353). To overcome this I took time to check back over the interview outline before concluding to ensure that all areas had been covered and any anomalies clarified. On balance, I believe the procedures followed allowed for fairly rigorous data collection.

### 3.2.2 Analyzing the data

The data analysis was an iterative process (Denscombe, 2010, p.272) as it overlapped with interviewing, with emerging themes being deliberately followed up in subsequent interviews. Where permission had been given to record, I transcribed what I deemed to be the key parts of the data. Before making these choices, I listened repeatedly to gain a sense of the overall messages coming from the interview. However, it should be acknowledged that the process of transcription and particularly deciding on what is ‘key’ is not a neutral exercise and includes a degree of subjectivity and interpretation (Kvale, 1996, p.167; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.367; Bell 2005, p.166). I attempted to base transcription decisions on the impact of responses on the research questions. Limiting transcription also reduced the likelihood of being overwhelmed by data (Groom and Littlemore, 2011, p.63). The advantage of the transcription process was that it made me listen with greater intensity, to relive the encounter with the respondent, and hopefully gain greater insight, paying particular attention to pauses and intonation that may suggest a lack of agreement or certainty, for example. As I transcribed I added notes where, for example, intonation, or some other factor, suggested doubt, hesitation or particular enthusiasm.

Having transcribed the data, I grouped all the information that related to each research question. I coded information (Denscombe, 2010, p.282) that had come from those who had already done a course to keep it distinct from those who had not. I then subdivided these groups, first by separating positive and negative evaluations and then by separating out particular sections of the book referred to. I highlighted any particular quotes that seemed representative of a group or sub-group. Finally, I added the written information from the

anonymous questionnaires to the data groups, ensuring the questionnaire source was marked, thus making the data relatively straightforward to analyze.

We will move on to look at the findings that emerged from the data.

#### 4.0 Findings and discussion of findings

The methodology described in Section 3 resulted in the findings and discussion that are reported on pages 374-379 of Publication 5. Table 3, below, offers a brief, bullet-point summary.

RQ 1 – Was the book relevant?	
Findings	Key issues/comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some sections of the book were more heavily used than others</li> <li>• the most used sections give very practical advice about things teachers can do in classrooms</li> <li>• the chapters on vocabulary and grammar were the most read, and typically in a 'careful and engaged' way</li> <li>• chapter 16 (Planning) had been referred to frequently by 11/15 who had done a course</li> <li>• appendices dealing with language were referred to repeatedly</li> <li>• the least read sections were Learner variation, Developing learner independence and Professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a traditional view of teaching emerges, with teachers seeing grammar and vocabulary as being very prominent in the teaching/learning process</li> <li>• advice on basic competencies (Richards, 2002) of how to present and practise language is valued</li> <li>• it may be that the courses followed put particular emphasis on grammar, vocabulary and awareness of language and hence pushed users to read and re-read certain sections</li> </ul>
RQ 2 – Was the book practical?	
Findings	Key issues/comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12/15 respondents who had done a course had used activities that were based on descriptions in the book</li> <li>• respondents had not used the full plans but had used them as models into which they could slot their own material while retaining the same lesson stages – e.g. Respondent 9 had taken the plan from page 109 and the material (p.141-143) as models to create his own lesson around the word <i>break</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the activities being used by a high proportion of those who had taught suggests that the book was practical</li> <li>• given the emphasis on practical knowledge in the literature (Shulman, 1986; Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin and Connelly, 1987; Perkins, 1997) this is important because it gives new teachers a stock of pedagogically sound activities that they can use and reflect on as they develop their own teaching repertoires and styles (Miller, 2009; Senior, 2006)</li> </ul>
RQ 3 – Was the book accessible?	
Findings	Key issues/comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that respondents had used activities in classes (see RQ 2) suggests that they found the book relatively easy to understand</li> <li>• only six respondents had read the book in sequence</li> <li>• other respondents created their own path through the book, based on their needs/interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the sequence in which sections were accessed suggests that sections need to be designed to stand alone as far as possible</li> <li>• the lack of time spent before reading commentaries may suggest that the users were seeing the sections as a transfer of knowledge</li> <li>• including a more thorough rationale for</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• none reported any difficulties caused by their reading pattern</li> <li>• the respondents found the commentaries easy to follow but rarely spent much time thinking about activities before reading the commentaries</li> </ul>	<p>the design in the introduction, may encourage prospective teachers to think through their own existing knowledge, beliefs and attitudes to a greater extent</p>
RQ 4 – Did the book support future development?	
Findings	Key issues/comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all the respondents talked about the need for ongoing development</li> <li>• they were also able to identify some areas of need that they perceived in their own teaching (often focusing on language awareness)</li> <li>• when asked about <i>how</i> that development may happen, answers tended to be vague (“it comes with experience”)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the teacher role of ‘reflector’ (Publication 3, p.14, p.128) was lost in the weight of other information and was not salient enough</li> <li>• given the prominence of reflective teaching as a model (Farrell, 2012; Freeman and Johnson, 1998; Wallace, 1991) going back at least as far as Dewey (1938), this is disappointing</li> <li>• the Professional development chapter was the only one with no tasks, which may have contributed to the relative lack of uptake</li> <li>• it may be that development tasks need to be integrated into other chapters, ensuring a regular focus</li> </ul>
RQ 5 – Did the book develop beliefs about teaching, as well as competencies?	
Findings	Key issues/comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there was a fairly widely held belief that people want to learn languages to aid communication</li> <li>• the interviews did not suggest that the respondents saw a clear link with how this impacted on their teaching, with quite strong views supporting the primacy of grammar instruction and fairly traditional teacher roles being emphasized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it seems that the respondents’ were influenced strongly by their existing beliefs (Borg, 2006, 2009) and this may also be indicated by the strategic reading of the book (see RQ 3) which highlighted the value of vocabulary and grammar sections</li> <li>• the book would have had greater impact had it done more to promote a critical examination of these beliefs at the very start</li> </ul>

Table 3 - Summary of findings and discussion from Publication 5

It can be seen that evidence suggests that Publication 3 was successful in meeting the first three criteria of effectiveness. However, it had a more limited impact when examining future development as a teacher and beliefs. This information has been used in planning the second edition of *Learning to Teach English*, with teacher development sections embedded in most chapters, for example. In addition, there is an introductory quiz which attempts to help users to explicitly consider their own beliefs and attitudes to language learning and teaching. This quiz also tackles myths concerning the learning/teaching process (Lightbown

and Spada, 1999, p.161-169) and thus problematizes inappropriate beliefs. Publication 4 also used these findings and hence guided reflection is embedded within each unit.

This section has summarized the findings and discussion reported in Publication 5. We will now move on to other forms of evaluation carried out subsequently to that publication.

## 5.0 Other methods of post-publication evaluation

Publication 5 was based on interviews with users of Publication 3. While this technique yielded useful findings, I wanted to add to that data using other forms of evaluation. This was partly to test the reliability of the data and partly to experiment with other methods of evaluation that could be exploited in future studies.

### 5.1 Interviews with teacher educators

One way in which I endeavoured to triangulate further the data reported in Publication 5 was through interviews with teacher educators at a CELTA centre that insists that all their prospective teachers purchase *Learning to Teach English*. Again semi-structured interviews were used (see appendix 7). One respondent had approximately fifteen years' experience of working in teacher education and on CELTA courses in particular, the other had seven years of similar experience. They were able to discuss their impressions of the most used sections (for example, the chapters on grammar and vocabulary teaching, along with the language awareness appendix being referred to frequently). This was based largely on observations made during workshop phases of input sessions. It was also confirmed that the users seemed both to understand and be able to implement what they read. This was based on weaker candidates being instructed to read particular sections which focused on areas of difficulty and then seeming to show improvement in these areas when next observed teaching. This points towards the data reported in Publication 5, particularly regarding accessibility and practicality, as being reliable. However, other variables may also have accounted for improvement (such as the experience of giving an unsuccessful lesson or the original feedback on the lesson).

It was noticeable that the centre had no specific criteria for evaluating teacher education material and relied largely on intuition and brief sampling of content, as well as soft feedback received from candidates on the course, who were never formally asked to evaluate the material they used. There is potential for further research into exactly how teacher education material is both selected and exploited.

The interviewing of teacher educators proved to be a useful form of initial teacher education materials evaluation because of their day-to-day involvement with prospective teachers. In order to avoid data being skewed towards concerns that were particular to one centre, or even to the UK, it would be useful to include more teacher educators and centres from various locations.

However, one potential disadvantage of interviews is that respondents can only tell you what they think and believe to be true (Denscombe, 2010, p.193), with respondents relating their recollections, opinions and perceptions. For this reason, I moved on to experiment with other forms of post-use evaluation.

## 5.2 Reading and reaction

This form of evaluation is based on 'reading and reaction' protocols described by Thaine (2012) for use in in-service development programmes. He traces the idea back to Evans (2008) who used similar procedures to develop critical thinking skills in EAP learners. However, it has not been used, to the best of my knowledge, as a tool of materials evaluation before and it involved users reading a chapter of Publication 3 (either chapter 1 or 8) and then commenting using two columns. The first column asked respondents to make a brief summary of each section and the second was a space for any questions that arose from the reading, including any need for clarification (see Appendix 8). The aim was to investigate the clarity and relevance (with regard to the level of detail) of the material.

This method has several advantages. One is the ethical consideration that there was a tangible benefit for the respondents, as I was able to supply answers to their questions. From the materials evaluation point of view, another benefit is that it offers a micro-evaluation (Ellis, 1998) of the material from the perspective of a likely user (in terms of ELT experience and assumed knowledge). This has strong echoes of the pre-publication process involving very detailed discussion of sections with one respondent, described in section 2.5 (above), which was so useful. In this post-publication formulation there is added objectivity, as the respondents were not known beforehand. I invited 15 respondents to take part in the research. All were in their final week of a CELTA course and four were prepared to contribute and gave their informed consent in writing. All four had finished the teaching practice component of the course (which was not true of the other people invited) and so felt that they had the necessary time. When teacher education is carried out so intensively, it is clear that any research which directly involves the participants must avoid placing inappropriate additional burdens on them. Two respondents summarized and commented on chapter 1 and two on chapter 8.

The analysis of the written summaries and questions can help to identify lack of clarity. For example, one question received, concerning page 8, was *What exactly counts as a text?*, highlighting the need for a clear, explicit definition. This evaluation process arguably gives more reliable information than a response to a question (such as question 12, Appendix 4) because respondents demonstrate understanding through writing a summary, rather than comment on their perceived understanding. The process can also identify where users

would value expansion and more detail. For example, a question concerning page 12 was *How do I expand the middle circle?*. Suggestions could be made here that relate to specific resources, or perhaps processes, such as through observing experienced colleagues.

Similar patterns of clarity and expansion emerged when chapter 8 was analyzed. For example, with regard to the section Developing Literacy, page 60, one question was *How does example 2 teach reading?*, suggesting a lack of clarity. Expansion of a point was requested with regard to Sources of Material, page 57, where one question was *How do you choose authentic texts?*.

Just as it is possible to investigate the cognitions of prospective teachers through interviews, so these summaries and questions written by the respondents also give an insight into their thoughts, knowledge and beliefs. For example, one question received regarding the natural approach (page 10) was *How can you learn a language without grammar?*, clearly indicating this prospective teacher's assumption that explicit grammar teaching was central to the learning/teaching process.

Despite the limited sample size, this form of evaluation provided some useful insights into the effectiveness of the material. However, it is necessary to offer a note of caution. The process is quite time-consuming (particularly when the answering of questions is factored in) and yields detailed information only on relatively small parts of the overall text. In addition, in order to gain reliable data, multiple respondents are required to read the same piece of text, meaning that it is unlikely that a whole book could be evaluated in this way, at least not as part of a small-scale research project. With this in mind, it would seem to be a useful way of gathering data in tandem with other methods.

### 5.3 Lesson planning

A further evaluation procedure used was to ask a prospective teacher to read chapters 4 and 5 of Publication 3 and then plan a vocabulary lesson. The aim was to get further insight into the accessibility and practicality of the material, thus working towards triangulating the data from the original set of interviews, reported in Publication 5. This respondent had finished an introductory course and was about to take up her first teaching job. She had decided to prepare by planning lessons using the material that the school had told her she would be using, so no additional burden was placed on the respondent. After the planning process we discussed the plan. The source material (Kay and Jones, 2007, p.65) is based around labelling pictures of household items. The new language is then practised by covering the words and learners asking/answering questions, such as *"What's this?" "A cushion"*. The



prospective teacher's plan suggested a good uptake from Publication 3's input. For example, in addition to the source material, there was attention paid to teaching collocations (Publication 3, p.34) through phrases such as *draw the curtains* and *make the bed*. There was an attempt to check understanding through using questions, such as *How many people can sit on a sofa?* (Publication 3, p.30) and a dialogue building activity was included as the learners imagined themselves redecorating the flat (Publication 3, p.36, example 2). This evaluation process gives further insight into the areas targeted by questions 15, 16 and 17 in the original survey. Like the teachers in the original survey, it seemed that she favoured a weak form of CLT, organizing the lesson into a PPP format, although this was probably influenced by the design of the original material.

While the evidence of the uptake from the material is encouraging, it could be accounted for by her knowledge that the plan would be discussed, leading to a deliberate effort to use activities described in the book. It would be interesting to see how much impact there was after longer periods of time and also to compare plans made before and after reading. It may also be useful to actually observe the lesson and see the extent to which the plan was put into practice. This lesson planning method of evaluation relies on teachers planning in some considerable detail (for example the precise formulation of questions to check understanding) and many teachers move away from planning in such detail quite rapidly (Tsui, 2009; Publication 7). However, despite the flaws, this was an attempt to see the actual impacts of the material, rather than relying solely on users' perceptions, as had been the case in Publication 5.

These other forms of small-scale evaluation focused particularly on the questions addressing practicality, relevance and accessibility and seemed to confirm the earlier results that the publication was successful in these areas. Having evaluated one publication in some detail, we will move on to consider the implications for future teacher education material evaluations.

#### 5.4 Future materials evaluations

Publication 3 has been evaluated using the pre-publication and post-publication methods described. The argument for systematic, rigorous and public evaluation of material that impacts on many people is strong. However, as Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010, p.1) point out, the research is potentially complex and publishers may be wary of making such information public as it is commercially sensitive. However, this does not prevent those who use and recommend teacher education material from making more systematic decisions. In this context, pre-publication evaluations are clearly irrelevant but we could identify two

potential uses of post-publication evaluations. The first would be an evaluation of the material prior to selection. The second would be after the material had been used, where the impacts on the users could be gauged, as in the evaluations carried out of Publication 3.

Whether the material is evaluated for selection or impact purposes, based on the discussion so far, it is possible to set out some principled criteria to be used, which are clear, concise and flexible (Makundan and Ahour, 2010, p.348). These include the degree to which the material:

- gives practical classroom support, as teachers learn through teaching (Burns and Richards, 2009, p.4; Publication 8)
- combines teaching competencies with developmental activity (Mann, 2005)
- allows for selective use (Publication 5)
- investigates the cognitions that prospective teachers bring to a course, particularly so that “inappropriate, unrealistic, or naive” (Borg, 2009, p.164) beliefs can be examined
- is locally relevant and is “congruent with, and interpretable within, the teacher’s own world of thought and action” (Pennington, 1996, p.346)
- encourages and supports reflective practice, for example through guided reflection and/or reflection tasks (Publication 1, p.181-184)
- encourages a collaborative, social, mutually supporting approach to being a colleague (Publication 7)
- includes theoretically justifiable approaches to teaching
- is accessible and comprehensible to a prospective teacher
- promotes teaching as an inclusive profession

The final point of this list may be realized through the descriptions of contexts, use of pictures, the names given to cases or even teaching strategies, such as the use of L1 in the classroom (Cook, 2008). It should be noted that it may not be necessary to use all these criteria in all evaluations, as the precise nature of any given instrument would depend on the “reasons, objectives and circumstances of the evaluation” (Tomlinson, 1999, p.11). Where material is designed to cover a particular syllabus, it is obviously essential that the material matches that syllabus (Publication 2, p.183).

If the purpose of the evaluation is material selection, checklists that focus on appropriate criteria with a Likert scale type ranking that can be analyzed quantitatively and quickly may be sufficient and such a system has been used in many evaluations of ELT material (Makundan and Ahour, 2010). However, where the aim is to measure the impact of the material on prospective teachers, it is necessary to collect more in depth data, usually

obtained through qualitative procedures. This may be through interviews (Publication 5) or through activities of the type described in sections 5.2 and 5.3 (above).

Other types of qualitative data collection are also possible. For example, I am currently trying to set up a research project where I would follow a course and ask participants to note:

- what material they accessed
- when they accessed it
- their purpose in accessing it
- their immediate evaluation of how useful (or not) they found it

This would therefore include a variety of material. However, there are issues with such research from an ethical point of view because, as noted in 5.2 (above), it is necessary to avoid placing an undue burden on participants. In this case, it is necessary to balance the pedagogic value (reflecting on material is useful) with the additional workload. One possible solution to this would be to set up a course blog, focusing on the points above, that participants could add to as and when they wanted and felt they had time, thus reducing the pressure on any individual.

Another project, of a much smaller scale and that overcomes the ethical limitation of burden, is to design some material that forms part of course content but also acts as a means of evaluating material. This is based on the reading and reacting protocols described in 5.2 (above). Prospective teachers do a jigsaw reading comparing texts from different sources on a common teaching topic. For example, in a group of three prospective teachers, each reads a text on error correction from a different teaching guide, before comparing the information they have found. It may be that information in one text will expand and/or clarify that of another. This activity also allows for a degree of differentiation (Petty, 2004), as prospective teachers who are judged as being stronger can be given texts that are judged by the teacher educator to be more complex.

To sum up, there are myriad ways in which material can be evaluated but the key point is that teacher education material should be subject to rigorous post-use evaluation, using methods that are relevant and fit for purpose. This process should be public, at least in the minimal sense of interested professionals sharing and discussing information.

## 6.0 Conclusion

This essay has considered the processes of pre-publication and post-publication evaluation and has made a case for the systematic, public evaluation of teacher education material. The processes through which that can be achieved are numerous and there is no single correct method, as appropriacy of method will depend on the context and precise purpose of the evaluation. Indeed, as so few evaluations have been published, variety is to be welcomed so that methods of data collection can be compared and themselves evaluated. This essay and total submission has begun to fill the gap in knowledge relating to initial teacher education material by publishing, analyzing and developing a detailed and revealing post-use evaluation.

### 6.1 Contribution to knowledge

The total submission has made a contribution to knowledge in two broad ways. There is a substantive contribution through the findings that emerged from the research reported in Publications 5, 7, 8 and 13 and also a contribution to knowledge based on the procedures of how material can be evaluated. I have made a case for, and exemplified, rigorous, post-use, public evaluation of material used in initial teacher education. Moreover, a substantial section of that has been published (Publication 5). As far as I know, this is the first systematic evaluation of teacher education material to be published that tries to gauge the impacts that the material had on users and the findings have been used to inform future publications (for example Publication 4 and a proposed second edition of *Learning to Teach English*). I have moved on from investigating users' perceptions of effectiveness to seeing how they interact with the material (5.2) and make use of it (5.3). In addition, I have suggested principled, clear, concise and flexible criteria that can be used in future evaluations (section 5.4).

The key substantive findings include:

- new teachers value and benefit from discussing teaching with teachers of a similar status to themselves (Publication 7), suggesting the need to encourage the building of support networks during initial teacher education and supporting the notion of teachers socializing into a community of practice (for example, Wenger, 1998)
- new teachers who have followed courses such as CELTA spend a lot of time searching for material that they are prepared to use and base their decisions more on whether they judge the material to be fun and different (to that which they have previously used) than on how it fits into a linguistic lesson aim (Publication 7), suggesting that initial teacher education materials need to both direct prospective

teachers to sources of material and help them to exploit that material more fully (for example, Publications 6 and 11)

- new teachers use books about teacher education material selectively and instrumentally to inform classroom practices, focusing on what has an immediate classroom application (Publication 5)
- a single professional development section may be missed (given the above point) and development activities are therefore more likely to be effective when integrated into other material, rather than being presented as a stand-alone entity (Publication 5)
- prospective teachers continue to value competency based models of teacher education and the security of being told what to do (Publications 5 and 8), suggesting the necessity to retain this, while incorporating more developmental strategies
- the emotional aspects of socializing into the profession are often over-looked in initial teacher education material but perhaps could be usefully included (Publication 5)

In future research I hope to evaluate material from the perspective of a greater range of users and also embed the research into a course more fully, allowing for data to be collected more precisely about when material is accessed and for what purposes, as well as including immediate evaluations of users, rather than recalled assessments. This builds on how users interact with material (5.2). The evaluation reported here has been of a traditional book format. I look forward to extending the research into other types of publication, such as online material, and that research will build on what I have presented in this submission.

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## **Appendix 1**

### List of publications

#### **Books**

1. (2007). *The CELTA Course trainee book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (with Scott Thornbury).
2. (2007). *The CELTA Course trainer's manual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (with Scott Thornbury).
3. (2005). *Learning to teach English*. Addlestone: Delta Publishing.

#### **Online teacher education material**

4. (2012). Cambridge English teacher: Vocabulary and pronunciation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

#### **Book chapter**

5. (2010). Evaluating the effectiveness of *Learning to Teach English* as an introduction to ELT. In B. Tomlinson & H. Masuhara (Eds.), *Research for materials development in language learning: Evidence for best practice*. London: Continuum.

#### **Refereed papers of conference proceedings**

6. (2011). Making the most of a reading text. In T. Pattison (Ed.), *IATEFL Selections*. Canterbury: IATEFL Publications.
7. (2007). Pre-service training and the first year of teaching. In B. Beavan (Ed.), *IATEFL Selections*. Canterbury: IATEFL Publications.

#### **Refereed journal pieces**

8. (2011). A bottom-up view of the needs of prospective teachers. *ELT World Online*, 3.
9. (2010). Giving learners a voice in correction and feedback. *ELT World Online*, 2.
10. (2010). Three experiments to become a better teacher. *TESOL-Spain*, 33(3).

#### **Other**

11. (2011). Making the most of it. *English Teaching Professional*, 74.
12. (2007). Language awareness. *English Teaching Professional*, 48.
13. (2006). Why the first year of teaching can seem like the longest. *Guardian Weekly* (September 22).
14. (2005). Early learning. *Guardian Online* (January).
15. (2004). Writing essentials. *English Teaching Professional*, 30.

16. (2003). Writing and the real world. *English Teaching Professional*, 28.
17. (2001). Getting the most from your graded reader. *English Teaching Professional*, 21.

## Appendix 2

### How the publications relate to each other and their impact

The hub of this submission is a group of publications that consist of material designed for teacher education. Publication 3 is designed for independent study, unmediated by a teacher educator. Publication 1 is material aimed at teacher education in a group context, mediated by a teacher educator and Publication 2 is accompanying support for the teacher educator. In addition, there is a Publication 4, which is an online teacher education course, aimed at teachers with little or no previous formal training and due to be published in early 2012 by Cambridge University Press. Publication 5 is a post-use evaluation of Publication 3. The links between the publications are shown diagrammatically in Table 4 (below) along with the number by which they are referred to in this essay.

The top box of Table 3 lists a group of publications that develop the knowledge base concerning the process of teacher education and the experiences of teachers entering the profession. These publications have fed into the articles about teaching and particularly the material designed to support teacher education. The second box lists a group of publications that contribute to and disseminate understanding and knowledge about teaching. They tend to focus on one specific aspect of language learning, such as reading, writing or grammar.

As the arrows indicate, the evaluation of material has fed back into the design of other material, notably Publication 4 and also a proposed second edition of *Learning to Teach English* (not listed within the set of publications as the contract has yet to be finalized).

Publications 7 and 13 are based on the same data but address different audiences. Publication 7 was in a blind, peer-reviewed book of conference proceedings, whereas Publication 13 was written for the weekly edition of *The Guardian* newspaper and so had the potential to address a much wider audience. Similarly, Publications 6 and 11 are similar in content, with 6 appearing in a blind, peer-reviewed book of conference proceedings and 11 in *English Teaching Professional*, again providing far wider dissemination, as this publication is widely respected in the profession and distributed in 120 countries. It can be seen that there is a wide variety of publication types. The books and book chapter are with highly respected publishing houses and *ELT World Online* is a double blind peer-reviewed journal published by the National University of Singapore, with feature articles up to 5000 words. There are also shorter refereed papers in books of conference proceedings and several pieces appeared in *English Teaching Professional*, which, as noted above, while not refereed, is very influential in the profession. The publications are linked through their thematic relationships and by having a strong practical focus.

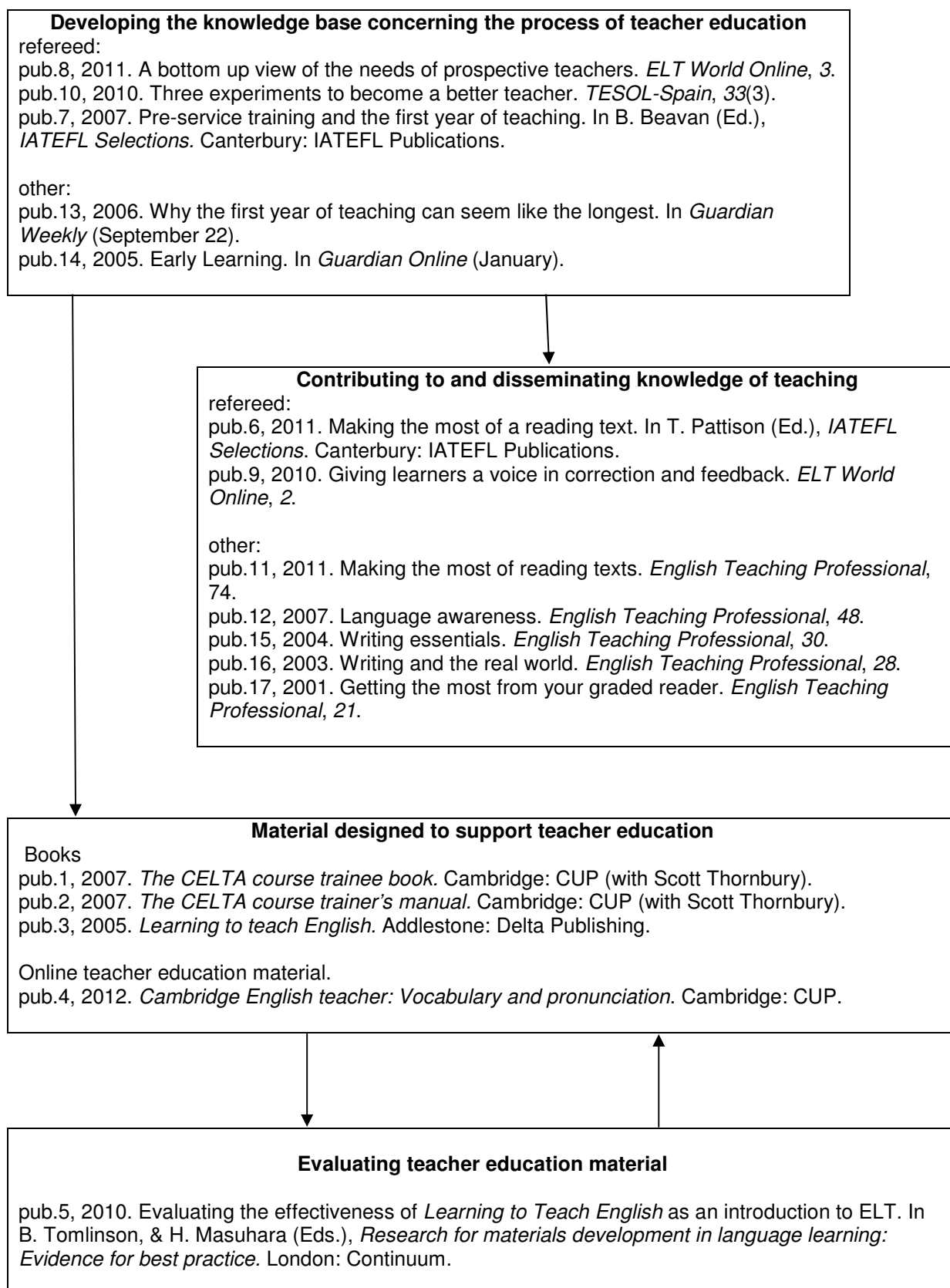


Table 4: The relationships between the publications



## Impact

One indicator of impact is the number of book copies sold and the overall readership. Six years on from its initial publication, *Learning to Teach English* still has sales of over 1000 copies a year, enough to justify a second edition. *The CELTA Course Trainee Book* has lifetime sales (to July 2011) of 12,833 and the *Trainer's Manual* has sales of 4,227.

However, it is *safe* to assume that the total readership has been significantly higher than these figures suggest. For example, the University of Portsmouth Library has eight copies of *Learning to Teach English*, which have been loaned in total 260 times, with the library also reporting a higher than average number of renewals as a proportion of loans. While this figure may not be entirely representative (as I teach at this university), it does demonstrate that each sale may potentially reach far more than one person. Readership figures for *English Teaching Professional* were not available but its wide distribution and standing in the profession suggest that articles reach a large number of readers. The National University of Singapore reported that my publications in *ELT World Online* had received over 1000 hits.

## Appendix 3

### Breakdown of writing responsibilities for *The CELTA Course*

#### Section A – The learners and their contexts

unit	title	first draft prepared by
1	Who are the learners?	Scott Thornbury
2	Learners as individuals	Scott Thornbury

#### Section B – Classroom teaching

3	Foreign language lesson	Peter Watkins
4	Classroom management	Peter Watkins
5	Presenting vocabulary	Peter Watkins
6	Presenting grammar (1)	Peter Watkins
7	Presenting grammar (2)	Peter Watkins
8	Practising new language	Peter Watkins
9	Error correction	Peter Watkins
10	Developing listening skills	Scott Thornbury
11	Developing reading skills	Scott Thornbury
12	Presenting language through texts	Scott Thornbury
13	Developing speaking skills	Peter Watkins
14	Developing writing skills	Peter Watkins
15	Integrating skills	Peter Watkins
16	Lesson planning: design and staging	Peter Watkins
17	Lesson planning: defining aims	Peter Watkins
18	Alternative approaches to lesson design	Peter Watkins
19	Planning a scheme of work	Peter Watkins
20	Motivating learners	Peter Watkins
21	Teaching different levels	Peter Watkins
22	English for specific purposes	Scott Thornbury
23	Teaching literacy	Peter Watkins
24	Monitoring and assessing learning	Peter Watkins
25	Teaching exam classes	Peter Watkins
26	Choosing and using teaching resources	Scott Thornbury

#### Section C – Language awareness

27	Introduction to language analysis	Scott Thornbury
28	Tense and aspect	Scott Thornbury
29	Meaning, form and use: the past	Scott Thornbury
30	Expressing future meaning	Scott Thornbury
31	Modality	Scott Thornbury
32	Conditionals and hypothetical meaning	Scott Thornbury
33	Language functions	Scott Thornbury
34	The noun phrase	Scott Thornbury
35	The sounds of English	Scott Thornbury
36	Stress, rhythm and intonation	Scott Thornbury

37	Teaching pronunciation	Scott Thornbury
38	Vocabulary	Scott Thornbury
39	Text grammar	Scott Thornbury

#### **Section D – Professional development**

40	Professional development and finding a job	Scott Thornbury/Peter Watkins
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## **Appendix 4**

### **Informed Consent Form (Publication 5)**

Thank you for considering being interviewed for this small scale research project. My name is Peter Watkins and I am the author of *Learning to Teach English* (2005, Delta Publishing). We are considering how the book could be improved in future editions and would like your views on the current version.

If you agree to take part, you should be aware:

- you will remain anonymous – you will not be identified in the reporting of the data
- you can stop the interview at any time you wish
- you can decide not to answer any questions that you would prefer not to
- you can ask for any section of the interview to be 'off record' and not reported
- I anticipate that interviews will last approximately 30 minutes

I would like to record our interview. Please delete, as appropriate:

- I agree to the interview being audio recorded. Yes/No
- I agree to the interviewer making notes during the interview. Yes/No
- I agree to my words being quoted (anonymously) in published reports of the research. Yes/No

Signed (participant):

Date:

Signed (interviewer):

Date:

## Appendix 5

### Profile of respondents (Publication 5)

Watkins, P. (2010). Evaluating the effectiveness of *Learning to Teach English* as an introduction to ELT. In B.Tomlinson & H. Masuhara (Eds.), *Research for materials development in language learning: Evidence for best practice*. London: Continuum.

respondent	known to me previously: yes/no	completed initial course: yes/no	female/male	age range	interview (recorded or notes made)/ questionnaire
1	yes	yes	female	21-25	audio recorded
2	no	yes	female	26-30	notes
3	yes	no	female	21-25	audio recorded
4	no	no	male	31-35	audio recorded
5	yes	yes	female	not given	notes
6	no	no	male	31-35	notes
7	no	yes	male	36-40	notes
8	yes	no	male	18-20	audio recorded
9	yes	yes	male	21-25	audio recorded
10	yes	no	female	26-30	audio recorded
11	no	yes	female	41-45	notes
12	yes	yes	male	26-30	notes
13	no	yes	female	26-30	notes
14	no	no	male	36-40	audio recorded
15	no	yes	female	36-40	notes
16	yes	yes	male	26-30	audio recorded
17	yes	yes	female	41-45	audio recorded
18	no	no	female	26-30	notes
19	yes	no	female	18-20	notes
20	no	no	male	21-25	notes
21	yes	yes	female	21-25	audio recorded
22	no	no	female	21-25	notes
23	anonymous	yes	male	21-25	questionnaire
24	anonymous	yes	female	26-30	questionnaire
25	anonymous	yes	male	26-30	questionnaire
26	anonymous	no	male	18-20	questionnaire
27	anonymous	no	male	21-25	questionnaire
28	anonymous	no	female	21-25	questionnaire

## Appendix 6

### Outline interview structure for users of *Learning to Teach English*

1. Why do the learners you have experience of want to learn English?
2. And/or - what do you think are the motives of people who follow English language courses?
3. Look at the list of contents. (*Show table below.*) Please tick the appropriate column.
4. Did you read the chapters in sequence?
5. If not, what determined your choice of sequence?
6. Did you read any chapters more than once? If so, how would you characterize your second reading?
7. How far apart (in terms of time) were the readings?
8. What motivated you to reread the sections?
9. If you have taught, have you used any of the activities described in your book in your lessons? (*Show book where necessary.*)
10. Did you adapt the activities? (*Show book where necessary.*)
11. In what ways?
12. Generally, did you find the chapters you read easy to follow? Can you think of any sections that were unclear? (*Show book where necessary.*)
13. Did you usually read the commentaries that accompany the chapters?
14. How long, on average, did you think about tasks before reading the commentary?
15. What types of lesson (grammar, skills and so on) are you familiar with?
16. What sort of stages would you include in each?
17. How might you sequence those stages?
18. Do you feel that all lessons should have a clearly defined linguistic aim?
19. Do you ever base lessons around what learners say/write in class, rather than plan beforehand?
20. What influences you when deciding on how much to plan?
21. What aspects of being a language teacher are you confident with? What do you need to work on?
22. How can you make improvements in this/these area(s)?

	I have read this in a manner which I would describe as:			not read
	careful and engaged	fairly quickly to pick up the main points	just a quick skim	
Introduction				
Chapter 1 Language, learning and teaching				
Chapter 2 Roles of teachers and learners				
Chapter 3 Managing a class				
Chapter 4 Teaching vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation				
Chapter 5 Teaching vocabulary				
Chapter 6 Teaching grammar				
Chapter 7 Teaching pronunciation				
Chapter 8 Developing reading skills				
Chapter 9 Developing listening skills				
Chapter 10 Developing writing skills				
Chapter 11 Developing speaking skills				
Chapter 12 Fluency and accuracy				
Chapter 13 Correcting learners				
Chapter 14 Developing learner independence				
Chapter 15 Learner variation				
Chapter 16 Planning and example lesson plans				
Chapter 17 ESOL and other teaching contexts				
Chapter 18 Professional development				
Appendix 1 Basic grammar terminology				
Appendix 2 Verb forms and their common uses				
Appendix 3 Phonemes of English				
Appendix 4 Material and Needs analysis form				

## **Appendix 7**

### **Outline interview with teacher educators**

1. What titles do you recommend to your CELTA candidates?
2. What criteria do you use to evaluate titles?
3. What pre-course tasks are set for candidates?
4. What are your impressions of how *Learning to Teach English* is used before the course?
5. During the course, does it form part of input sessions?
6. During the course, does it form part of lesson planning workshops?
7. Can you give examples of how/when the candidates use the book?
8. What are your impressions of the parts that they refer to most?
9. Do you ever see evidence of use of the book in Teaching Practice?



## Appendix 8

### Reading and reacting to *Learning to Teach English*

#### Chapter 1

Please write a brief summary of each section in the space provided.	Please write any questions you want to ask about what you have read. Do you need further clarification on anything?
The nature of language	
The nature of language learning	
The nature of language teaching	
Approaches to learning and teaching	
Communicative approaches	

## Chapter 8

Please write a brief summary of each section in the space provided.	Please write any questions you want to ask about what you have read. Do you need further clarification on anything?
Skills development lessons	
Sources of material	
Reading in 'real life'	
Reading in the classroom	
An example reading lesson	
Stages of a reading or listening lesson	
Developing literacy	

Whilst registered as a candidate for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy by Publication, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

I confirm that I was responsible for 50% of the jointly authored work, as detailed in Appendix 3.

Peter Watkins